

IN THE SPECIFICATION

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 7, line 5, as follows:

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In general, as can be seen from the figures, the closure for containers of the invention comprises substantially rigid supporting and sealing means 3 and a covering body 5 (commonly, but not in a limiting way, placed externally with respect to the supporting and sealing means 3) made of plastic material (commonly, but not in a limiting way, elastomeric material): the covering body 5 in Fig. 1 is placed around the supporting and sealing means 3 in order to assume, for example, the external cylindrical shape of a bottle plug (Fig. 2). The dimensions of the covering body 5 are such as to allow it to be inserted into a traditional bottle neck (not shown) and then to cooperate with the internal walls thereof, due to the elastomeric material of which the plug 1 is made, to guarantee a perfect seal for the substance contained inside the bottle. The covering body 5 in practice cooperates by interference with the container opening to prevent the material contained therein from leaking out and to prevent gases and/or foreign substances from entering inside the container itself. The supporting and sealing means 3 are useful both for supporting the closure 1 in a longitudinal direction, and for strengthening the seal thereof with the container at one or more points. The supporting and sealing means 3 are important, since the elastomeric material could in time elongate and partly impair the sealing functionality: this is prevented by the means 3 above all in the part of the closure 1 facing the container interior.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 11, line 20, as follows:

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In order to perform the abovementioned barrier function, the closure 1 of the invention may be ^{and} is further equipped with barrier means 8 (~~not shown~~), for example in the form of at least one circular thin layer placed on the side of the closure 1 facing the container interior; said thin layer is made of a material suitable for forming such a barrier, for example even gold. Other types of barrier means could be at least one disk or at least one washer, for example made of glass for better storage of the product inside the container.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 13, line 2, as follows:

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According to a second preferred embodiment of the closure 1₂ of the invention, shown in Fig. 3, the supporting and sealing means 3₂ 3 are composed of at least one lower threaded support 13 and at least one upper threaded support 15 that are screwed into corresponding recesses formed inside the covering body 5₂ 5 and that engage a hollow elongated support member 14.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 13, line 10, as follows:

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The lower support 13 is adapted to be coupled by interference with the container opening to prevent gases from entering thereinto, while the upper support 15 is adapted, by means of an insertion recess 20, to allow insertion of a corkscrew into the closure 1₂ + for the removal thereof. Moreover, the elongated support member 14 is equipped with a plurality of longitudinal ribs 21 for engagement with the corkscrew when removing the plug 1₂ +. Also in this case, the closure 1₂ + of Fig. 3 has the lower support 13 shaped (in 13') in order to support the covering body 5₂ 5 that expands inside it, and to

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simultaneously provide insertion means to insert the closure 1₂ into the container opening (in this case the bottle neck).

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 14, line 5, as follows:

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According to a third preferred embodiment of the closure 1₃ of the invention, shown in Figs. 4 and 5, the supporting and sealing means 3₃ are composed of an elongated support body 26 that extends substantially along the whole length of the closure 1₃; such elongated support body 26 is further equipped with at least one lower sealing member 28 adapted to guarantee sealing of the closure 1 against the container opening walls.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 14, line 15, as follows:

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In the embodiment shown in Figs. 4 and 5, the covering body 5₃ is of cylindrical shape and the lower sealing member 28 is shaped as a frustum of a cone whose radius is less than the radius of the covering body 5₃.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 14, line 19, as follows:

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Always as shown in Figs. 4 and 5, the elongated support body 26 is further equipped with at least one upper sealing member 30 adapted to improve sealing of the closure 1 against the container opening walls. The upper sealing member 30 is also shaped as a frustum of a cone whose radius is less than the radius of the covering body 5₃ and is substantially identical to the radius of the lower sealing member 28.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 15, line 2, as follows:

Moreover, the elongated support body 26 is of cylindrical shape and is closed at the end thereof that is facing toward the container interior: this obviously serves to increase the sealing strength of the whole closure 1₃ †, and can also be used during removal of the closure 1₃ † from the container to prevent, for example, the corkscrew from drilling right through the plug 1₃ †, such operation being always inadvisable in the field.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 15, line 11, as follows:

According to a fourth preferred embodiment of the invention, shown in Fig. 6, the supporting and sealing means 3₄ ‡ are composed of a first hollow member 30 whose cross section is "T"-shaped and a second hollow member 32, whose cross section is in the shape of an inverted "T", that is adapted to contain an end of the first hollow member 30 through threaded engagement of the respective ends 31 and 33 of the two members 30 and 32. The arrangement in Fig. 6 allows the closure 1₄ † to be used by orienting it and inserting it at will into the container, since both ends 30' and 32' of the supporting and sealing means 3₄ ‡ have the same shape and are equipped with the recesses 35 and 37 for inserting the means for removing the closure 1₄ †.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 15, line 25, as follows:

According to a fifth preferred embodiment of the invention, shown in Fig. 7, the supporting and sealing means 3₅ ‡ are composed of a cylindrically-shaped upper hollow member 40 open at both ends 41 and 42, in order to increase the seal against the container opening walls. The upper member 40 is placed above and outside a lower hollow

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member 43 that, in its central part 44, is shaped as an elongated cylinder that is inserted into the upper member 40, while in its part 46 facing toward the container interior it is shaped as a flat closure with insertion flarings 48 for insertion of the closure 1₅ † into the container. Once the upper member 40 and the lower member 43 have been coupled, they are surrounded by the covering body 5₅ † so that the plastic material of which this is composed penetrates into the spaces left empty due to coupling of the two members 40 and 43, and penetrates into the lower member 43 in such a way that its part 46, substantially performing the function of a barrier, is outside the covering body 5₅ †. The recess 49 allowing penetration of the removing means into the closure 1₅ † is in this case directly formed in the covering body 5₅ †.

Please amend the paragraph beginning on Page 16, line 23, as follows:

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According to a sixth preferred embodiment of the invention, shown in Fig. 8, the supporting and sealing means 3₆ † are composed of three mutually coupled internal hollow members, in which the first internal hollow member 50 has an elongated cylindrical shape and a step 51 formed inside it and two respective threaded coupling sections 52 and 53. The first internal hollow member 50 is further equipped with a circular upper sealing projection 54. The second internal hollow member 55 has a cylindrical shape and is equipped in its upper part with a recess 56 for insertion of the means for removing the closure 1₆ † and is equipped in its lower part with a threaded section 57 adapted to cooperate through engagement with the corresponding threaded section 52 of the first internal hollow member 50; moreover, the second internal member

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55 abuts against the first internal member 50 on the shoulder of the step 51 in order not to excessively penetrate into the first member 50. Finally, the third internal hollow member 58 is almost completely threaded in 59 in order to cooperate through engagement with the respective threaded section 53 of the first internal member 50, and is equipped with a lower flat part 60 that performs sealing and barrier functions for the closure 1₆ †, being oriented toward the container interior. In the arrangement in Fig. 8, the covering body 5₆ 5 is applied outside the three internal hollow members 50, 55, 58, while, inside, the closure 1₆ † remains equipped with a hollow cylindrical recess 61 into which the means for removing the closure 1₆ † will penetrate.

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 18, line 4, as follows:

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According to a seventh preferred embodiment of the invention, shown in Fig. 9, the supporting and sealing means 3₇ 3 are composed of a bearing member 63 having a substantially elongated cylindrical shape, that is externally threaded in 64 all along its length and is internally equipped with a plurality of ribs 65 for engaging with the means for removing the closure 1₇ †. around such bearing member 63 are screwed a first closure member 66 and a second closure member 67 that are identical and are composed of an internally threaded cylindrical body 66', 67' closed at one end by a circular flat cover 66", 67" with its external edges bent slightly inwards. After the first and the second closure members 66, 67 have been screwed onto the bearing member 63, the covering body 5₇ 5 is applied so that it covers the three members 63, 66, 67 and is contained inside the bent edge of the covers 66", 67". The closure 1₇ † of this

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arrangement likewise does not have an upper and a lower part, but can be used under any desired vertical orientation.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 18, line 24, as follows:

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According to an eighth preferred embodiment of the invention, shown in Fig. 10, the supporting and sealing means 3_g 3 are composed of a bearing member 70 having a substantially elongated cylindrical shape, that is internally threaded in 71 all along its length and is internally equipped with a cylindrical threaded structure 72 that is screwed inside it and that helps in further reinforcing it. Inside this bearing member 70 are screwed an upper closure member 73 and a lower closure member 74. The upper closure member 73 is equipped with a cylindrical threaded body 74 that is screwed inside the bearing member 70 and that is overlapped by a cover 75 containing a recess 76 for insertion of the means for removing the closure 1_g 4. The lower closure member 74 is composed of a cylindrical threaded body 77 adapted to be screwed inside the bearing member 70, and a circular flat lower cover 78 with flarings 79 for insertion into the container opening; in this case, however, the lower closure member 74 is shaped in such a way as to form a circular recess 80 between cylindrical body 77 and cover 78: the recess 80 is adapted to house an end of the bearing member 70 to increase the sealing and strength of the supporting and sealing means 3_g 3 as a whole. In this arrangement, after having produced the supporting and sealing means 3_g 3 by coupling their various components, the covering body 5_g 5 is expanded in order to surround them, leaving the covers 75 and 78 outside.

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 20, line 3, as follows:

R/S
According to a ninth preferred embodiment of the invention, shown in Figs. 11 and 13, the supporting and sealing means 3₉ 3 are composed of an upper closure member 91 and a lower closure member 92. The upper closure member 91 is composed of a hollow cylindrical body equipped at one of its ends with a plurality of small teeth 93 and at the opposite end with a cover 94 having a recess 95 for insertion of the means for removing the closure 1₉ 4. The lower closure member 92 is composed of a hollow cylindrical body equipped at one of its ends with a plurality of small teeth 96 and at the opposite end with a circular flat cover 97 equipped with a circular collar 98 adapted to contain the material of the covering body 5₉ 5. The covering body 5₉ 5 is expanded around the two closure members 91 and 92 in order to surround their respective cylindrical bodies and to engage their respective small teeth 93 and 96, penetrating into the recess 98 and leaving only the covers 94 and 97 outside.

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 20, line 22, as follows:

R/S
Moreover, according to a tenth preferred embodiment of the invention, shown in Fig. 12, the supporting and sealing means 3₁₀ 3 are composed of an upper closure member 101 and a lower closure member 102. The upper closure member 101 is composed of a hollow cylindrical body equipped at one of its ends with a tooth 103 and at the opposite end with a cover 104 having a recess 105 for insertion of the means for removing the closure 1₁₀ 4. The lower closure member 102 is composed of a hollow cylindrical body equipped at one of its ends with a tooth 106 and at the opposite end with

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a circular flat cover 107 equipped with a circular collar 108 adapted to contain the material of the covering body $\underline{5}_{10}$ 5. The supporting and sealing means $\underline{3}_{10}$ 3 in this case receive an internal reinforcement from the mutual coupling of the two teeth 103 and 106. The covering body $\underline{5}_{10}$ 5 is expanded around the two closure members 101 and 102 in order to surround their respective cylindrical bodies, penetrating into the recess 108 and leaving only the covers 104 and 107 outside.

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 21, line 18, as follows:

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According to an eleventh preferred embodiment of the invention, shown in Figs. 14 to 16, the supporting and sealing means $\underline{3}_{11}$ 3 are composed of an upper closure member 121 and a lower closure member 122. The upper closure member 121 is composed of a hollow cylindrical body equipped at one of its ends with a threaded or toothed wall 123 and at the opposite end with a cover 124 having a recess 125 for insertion of the removing means for the closure $\underline{1}_{11}$ 1. The lower closure member 122 is composed of a hollow cylindrical body equipped at one of its ends with a threaded or toothed recess 126 and at the opposite end with a circular flat cover 127 equipped with a circular collar 128 adapted to contain the material of the covering body $\underline{5}_{11}$ 5. The supporting and sealing means $\underline{3}_{11}$ 3 in this case are produced through the mutual coupling of the wall 123 and the recess 126 by means of their threads or small teeth. The covering body $\underline{5}_{11}$ 5 is expanded around the two closure members 121 and 122 in order to surround their respective cylindrical bodies, penetrating into the recess 128 and leaving only the

R17
covers 124 and 127 outside. Fig. 16 shows in detail the coupling between the closure 1₁₁ + and the mouth 182 of the container (not shown).

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 22, line 17, as follows:

R18
In the embodiment shown in Figures 17 and 18, the supporting and sealing means 3₁₂ 3 are composed of a reinforcing member 129 having a basically cylindrical hollow body 130 terminating at both ends in annular shoulders 131, 131'. The lower annular shoulder 131, which is at the end of the closure 1₁₂ + designed to be inserted in the neck of the container, is of a larger diameter than the upper shoulder 131'.

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 23, line 8, as follows:

R19
The covering body 5₁₂ 5 is thermoformed directly on said reinforcing member 129, in such a way that the elastomeric material fills the cavity of the hollow body 130 and the external space between the two shoulders 131, 131'. The annular reliefs 132 give the covering body 5₁₂ 5 purchase. It is clear therefore that the closure 1₁₂ + will assume a frustoconical shape, with the larger base designed to be inserted into the neck of the container. This maximizes the seal created by the closure. The fact that the annular reliefs 132 do not extend radially as far as the lateral surface of the covering body 5₁₂ 5 further contributes to the seal of the closure and moreover does not spoil the aesthetic appearance of the closure, as clearly shown in Figure 17.

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 23, line 23, as follows:

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Another important feature of this embodiment is that the base 133 of the hollow body 130 is oriented toward the interior of the container and therefore gives the closure

R 20
1₁₂ + excellent impermeability to atmospheric oxygen. Meanwhile, the other end of the hollow body 130 is, as stated earlier, open and filled with the elastomeric foam material. This facilitates the insertion of the corkscrew.

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 24, line 6, as follows:

R 21
In the embodiment shown in Figures 19 and 20, the supporting and sealing means 3₁₃ 3 are composed of a reinforcing member 134 and a closure member 135. These are coupled together detachably.

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 25, line 5, as follows:

The covering body 5₁₃ 5 is of basically cylindrical form, but with an outward swelling to maximize the seal formed by the closure. The interior is hollow and its surface has ribs 144 lying in planes perpendicular to the axis of the covering body 5.

R 22
This covering body 5 is pushed onto the hollow body 136, and then the closure member 135 is inserted on top of that. In this way the covering body 5₁₃ 5 is held between the annular profile 138 and said closure member 135. The ribs 144 encourage the compression of the material and its elastic return, which means that the covering body can be made from a wide variety of different materials, such as, besides those described earlier, silicone, in particular an LSR (Liquid Silicone Rubber, preferably a two-component LSR.

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 26, line 15, as follows:

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When it comes to producing labels, drawings or captions on the surface of the closure (+) according to the invention, according to the invention, the invention allows

the use of laser-based methods in addition to the normal technologies of ink printing.

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The type of laser and the amount of energy required for this marking process will depend on the plastic material being marked. For the material used in the closures of the present invention it will usually be preferred to use an Nd:YAG laser having a power of 30 to 200 Watts and a wavelength of 1064 nm (secondary waves 531-355-266 nm). The plastic material of which the plug is composed must be treated with a color-changing master that changes coloration when struck by the laser beam. A preferred master is SARMATENE® from Clariant. The color-changing master is added in quantities of between 1% and 4%, preferably approximately 2T. The choice of a laser-marking method involving the use of a color-changing master, instead of laser processes where the marking is produced by surface carbonization, is fundamental because in the case of a closure for containers in which leaktightness of the container is essential, marking by surface carbonization leads irremediably to unacceptable surface irregularities. These surface irregularities would then prevent compliance with the inside surface of the neck of the container as required for an airtight closure.
